

Contents

Introduction	5
Purpose of the publication.....	7
Unity.....	8
The importance of early education.....	9
Home learning environments (HLE).....	9
Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on early education and home learning environments.....	10
Factors influencing effective home learning environments	13
Understanding public attitudes to the early years	13
Parent mental health and well-being	14
Time pressures on families	15
Holistic needs of children and families	15
Strategies to support vulnerable families.....	16
The need for early intervention for children	18
The role of the early years setting in promoting home learning	20
Statutory requirements	20
The key person/worker role	22
Effective parent partnerships	23
Understanding families and their communities	24
Include, involve and engage all parents.....	26
Effective communication for parent partnerships.....	27
Promoting the home learning environment.....	29
Family learning.....	31
Barriers to home learning	32
Activity bank: Part 1	38

Sample ideas for effective parent partnerships.....	38
Activity bank: Part 2	40
Practical ideas for linking the setting and home learning environments ...	40
Activity bank: Part 3	48
Home learning ideas for nurseries to share with families	48
Annex 1	111
Adult mental health support services.....	111
Annex 2	112
Maslow’s hierarchy of needs	112
Annex 3	114
Parent partnership audit.....	114
Home learning action plan.....	118
Annex 4	119
Home learning policy (sample)	119
Annex 5	120
Factsheet: Benefits of everyday routines on children’s learning and development.....	120
Annex 6	127
Websites to support and enhance home learning	127
References	129

Family learning can help to narrow the attainment gap by having a focus on reducing the impact of cycles of deprivation and low attainment. The effects of family learning extend beyond the duration of the intervention and provide lasting impacts and improved outcomes (*Review of family learning, 2016*)⁴¹.

Find out about family learning sessions in the local area through the local Family Information Service.

Barriers to home learning

Despite a setting's best efforts at effective partnership working, barriers and challenges for some families will prevent or reduce their capacity to support learning activities at home. As previously discussed, the more a setting can know, understand and therefore overcome these barriers and challenges, the better placed they are to provide successful home learning activities.

This can be summarised in this statement from *Birth to 5 matters* (2020)⁴²:

"Equity and inclusion require more than treating everyone the same. Practitioners need to understand the difference between equity and equality. Equality aims to provide fairness through treating everyone the same regardless of need, while equity achieves this through treating people differently dependent on need. While it is vital for all children and their families to be included and for difference to be celebrated, it is also important that early years practitioners are aware of the significant physical, emotional and cognitive barriers many children encounter in accessing early education."

The following presents some of the common barriers and challenges along with some suggestions for possible solutions.

Barrier/ challenge for family	Possible solutions
Lack of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge how busy families can be • Reflect on the activities provided and consider if they are tailored to the family or general for everyone • Consider providing short, basic activities as well as extension activities for those who have more time • Check if the activity is time efficient and/or can be carried out within daily routines • Ensure parents are aware that activities are not compulsory.
Child not willing to engage with the activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the parents' feelings and discuss why they feel their child will not engage • Share ideas that allow the home learning activities to be tailored to the family's individual needs, routines and their interests. The activity may be what the child is already playing with and when they are already playing, rather than introducing new things or at set times of the day • ASK the parent would like to join you in the setting where you can model activities that they could do at home • Plan stay and play sessions or short workshops to share positive messages about learning and development in a wider forum and enable parents to talk with other parents in similar situations.
Child not interested in reading at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about children who have different interests - some children might look at and talk about photos, pictures, non-fiction books and magazines alongside their play interests e.g. a car magazine or posters out in the community